

Level of Care Workgroup
August 21, 2015
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Nebraska Children’s Home Society
4700 Valley Road
Lincoln, NE

Call to Order

The Level of Care Workgroup Chair, Lana Temple-Plotz, began the meeting at 1:05 p.m. She welcomed the members present.

Workgroup Members present (7):

Susan Henrie	Jacquelyn Meyer	Lana Temple-Plotz
Karen Knapp	Dave Newell	
Doug Kreifels (1:31)	Stacey Scholten	

Guests in Attendance (2):

Bethany Allen.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission
Amanda Felton.....	Nebraska Children’s Commission

Discussion

Lana asked if Bethany Allen, Policy Analyst with the Nebraska Children’s Commission, would refresh the members on the topics needing review from the last meeting. Ms. Allen identified four topics that needed to be addressed. The four topics included transportation responsibilities, the appropriateness of Level of Care (LOC) 8 within the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibilities (NCR) tool, addressing the needs of children that are over and above what the NCR accommodates for, and the potential for a fourth Level within the LOCs of the NCR tool.

A. Transportation

Lengthy dialogue ensued regarding the mechanisms in place to provide payment for transportation received by the foster parents and by the agency. The group questioned if proper education was being given to the caregivers regarding transportation reimbursement and the process for receiving it.

The topic shifted when Dave Newell noted that the complications are less to do with payment, and more to do with the logistics of transporting the children. In homes with several youths, often times the agencies will supplement transportation needs to caregivers who cannot fulfill all the necessary transportation needs. The Workgroup agreed that a group should be formed to clarify who will assume transportation responsibilities for youth – the caregiver or the agency - by revising the language in each level definition of the NCR. Individuals recommended to work on this project included Karen Knapp, Jacquelyn Meyer, and Robin Chadwell.

B. Level Of Care (LOC) 8

The Workgroup moved on to the topic of the LOC 8 in the NCR. It was debated as to if the LOC should be split with Transition to Permanency as the eighth LOC and Independent Living as a ninth LOC. One option raised was to keep them both under LOC 8, but to include a place to indicate if the youth's plan is for Permanency or Independent Living. If this option were selected, Karen Knapp noted that whatever plan was selected would need to be very clear in what that looked like for both the caregiver and the agency involved.

As the Workgroup focused in on LOC 8, it became clear that the language of the definitions was confusing. The group of Karen, Jacquelyn, and Robin already working on addressing the transportation definitions within the NRC agreed to also revisit the definitions within this LOC to clear up any confusion regarding Permanency vs. Independent Living.

C. Outlier Children With Needs Above and Beyond the Levels of the NCR/Adding a fourth Level to the LOCs

Currently, youth that have needs that are greater than those covered in the NCR tool, have a Letter of Agreement created that outlines their required services. The benefits to keeping youth with extraordinary needs under a Letter of Agreement are that the administration is aware of each individual case and the situations surrounding them. The negative to using Letters of Agreement as opposed to a something like a fourth level of care is that there is no standardized methodology for the rates, which prevents the use of Federal IV-E funding.

Several ideas were proposed including adding a fourth level that requires administrative approval and creating a standard methodology for determining rates for higher levels of functional, cognitive, or medical needs. It was determined that this issue may be larger than the scope of the Workgroup and would be presented to the Foster Care Rate Reimbursement Committee who can subsequently propose a recommendation to the Nebraska Children's Commission.

D. Discrepancies between caregiver and agency responsibilities regarding the needs of the child

Throughout the general discussion, the topic of caregiver/agency responsibilities continued to come up. The members conferred over how to handle situations in which caregivers are unable to take on the higher responsibilities required to manage the child in their care.. In these cases the agencies must step in and compensate to meet the youth's needs. It was mentioned that there was a need for an administrative reimbursement rate and a separate rate for caregivers so that appropriate compensation could be administered to both parties. Conversation ensued regarding how to accommodate this need.

The Workgroup decided that some sort of standardized needs assessment was needed to assist in recognizing the level of care necessary for the youth. Debate occurred as to if the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool or the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) would be a more appropriate way to assess child needs. In order to make an educated decision, the members agreed to invite people with expertise with both tools to discuss how they relate and compare. The two individuals recommended to discuss

the tools with the Workgroup were Dan Little with the Nebraska Families Collaborative and Ashley Peters from the Department of Health and Human Services.

As for how to address the need to pay the agencies at a higher rate when the foster parents are unable to take on the higher responsibilities required to manage the child in their care, the Workgroup had difficulty reaching a solution. The members recalled that the Administration rate for reimbursement was originally determined by the Foster Family-Based Treatment Association (FFTA). It was agreed to take this issue to the FFTA for review.

Final Recommendations

- Karen Knapp, Jacquelyn Meyer, and Robin Chadwell will look into the LOC definitions and how they relate to transportation.
- The same group mentioned above will review LOC 8 and clean up the definitions to clear up any confusion that may occur between the terms Permanency and Independent Living.
- Dan Little and Ashley Peters, individuals with expertise in the use of NCR and how it relates to the CANS and the FSNA, will attend the next meeting to discuss the two tools.
- The issue of outlying children with needs beyond the NCR will be brought to the attention of the Foster Care Rate Reimbursement Committee for review.
- The Foster Family-Based Treatment association would be approached about the discrepancies between youth needs and foster parent responsibilities and their experience with the issue.

Next Meeting Planning

Bethany Allen informed the Workgroup that if they wished any of these issues to be included in the December 2015 legislative report of the Nebraska Children's Commission that they would need to have it prepared for recommendation to present at their November 17th meeting. Mr. Newell indicated that he would like to look into recommending Medicaid Treatment Foster Care as an option under the next Medicaid plan. A meeting was scheduled for 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 16, 2015 to review the progress of the Workgroup and make final recommendations for a report to submit to the larger Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee and the Nebraska Children's Commission.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

08/26/2015

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